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Notes from McNamara/Lemnitzer Appearances before Defense
Subcommittee of House Appropriations Committee

1 February 1962

Congressman Gerald R. Ford, Jr. (R., Michigan) was reviewing last year's estimates and this year's estimates with General Lemnitzer on the subject of Soviet ICBMs on launcher. He inquired as to why the tremendous drop from last year to this year. General Lemnitzer indicated that the low level of the Soviet ICBMs resulted chiefly from the Soviet decision not to deploy the first generation missile but to press for a second generation. Again Mr. Ford asked why. Lemnitzer went off the record but it is understood that he referred to the production plants.

Mr. Ford stated in connection with the big bomber fiasco of a few years ago and the current ICBM fiasco, "I must admit that my attitude toward the reliability of our intelligence is changing considerably." Lemnitzer pointed out that this was a tough intelligence problem which was receiving the highest priority indicating considerable research and development and new techniques.

Mr. McNamara commented that there were really two categories of intelligence: (1) present operational capability and (2) projections. He pointed out that difficult as it was we were able to do considerably better in the first category but as to the second category this inevitably was affected by Soviet technical problems, deployment problems and shifts of planning and, consequently, it was just not as accurate as the first category.

Ford stated that the change of the estimate in the 12-month period cannot help but cast doubt on the reliability of intelligence. He stated we should go in and find out on what basis we have come up with a harder set of figures; lacking such understanding one could conclude that the change was made for other reasons. Mr. McNamara reiterated that our capabilities to collect information have increased. Mr. Mahon interjected at this point that it was to be hoped that any political factors in connection with intelligence estimates would not be brought into the picture and he hoped to be convinced on this matter. He then added that what Mr. Ford was really trying to say in nice language was whether or not the estimates could be rigged.

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Mr. Minshall indicated that he conceded that possibly some of the new techniques were very sensitive although one could possibly guess at them. However, he believed that some members of the Subcommittee should be briefed on these new techniques specifically mentioning Ford and Taber. Mahon indicated that he had been briefed to some extent. Ford commented by stating that he was asking his questions as if he were unaware of these matters.

Mr. Ford then questioned General Lemnitzer on the point of whether or not if the U-2 had continued its work the estimates would not be better. General Lemnitzer conceded that this would help. Off the record, in response to Ford's question, Lemnitzer stated that the U-2 was stood down on missions over Russia. Ford added "It was a mistake to stop them."